

MEETING SUMMARY | Dinkey Collaborative Full Group

August 4, 2011

Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project, Sierra National Forest

Table of Contents

Action Items.....	1
1. Welcome and Introductions.....	1
2. DLRP Budget Discussion	1
3. Budget Options Discussion.....	4
4. Ladder Fuels Joint Fact-Finding Update	6
5. Informational Updates: Monitoring, Soaproot, Eastfork, and Snowy Patterson	7
6. Questions for Mr. Dan Jiron, Deputy Regional Forester	8
7. Attendees	8

Action Items

1. SNF to provide summary of matching funds contributed so far.
2. Monitoring Work Group to incorporate Dinkey North and South activities.
3. SNF to provide a list of projects with existing NEPA documents.
4. Ms. Flick to develop a first draft DLRP fact sheet.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Mosé Jones-Yellin, Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project (DLRP) manager for the Sierra National Forest (SNF), welcomed the participants to the full Collaborative meeting and reviewed the agenda, noting the intent of different items. Facilitator Dorian Fougères, Center for Collaborative Policy, CSUS, reviewed the meeting ground rules and handouts. The group thanked Mr. Rich Bagley for arranging for the group to use Southern California Edison's campground at Shaver Lake.

2. DLRP Budget Discussion

Mose Jones-Yellin, DLRP Project Manager, reviewed the variety of funding sources that constitute Sierra National Forest's annual budget. For fiscal year (FY) 2011 (from October 1, 2010, through September 30, 2011) Sierra National Forest had around \$5.5 million. Mose noted that balances do not typically roll over, although debt does. Some of this came from line items from the regional office, which include expected deliverables. Second, grants from the State of California and other organizations (non-profits, etc) provided some additional funds. Third is "generated" revenue that comes from camp fees, use permits, products, and outfitters; this money first goes to the general fund in Washington, D.C., and is then reallocated. The forest receives about 2 million a year from the Big Creek fire recovery fund,

which runs out in early fiscal year 2012. Finally, Congress can allocate funds directly -- like with the DLRP. The

Mr. Jones-Yellin then handed out a summary of current expenses. He noted that the Collaborative had received about 60% of what it originally proposed and requested. Mr. Stan van Velsor asked what portion the Forest matched, and flagged the importance of tracking matching funds. Mr. Jones-Yellin explained that the Forest is committed to a 100% match, raising the total for FY 2011 to approximately 2.4 million for the DLRP, and as of mid-July, 2011, about \$1 million have been spent so far. Ms. Cindy Whelan noted that in some cases the match may be greater. Mr. Jones-Yellin continued that the treatments shown all are from Dinkey North and South, as well as road work. Contracts listed have been sold but not necessarily completed. He noted further that personnel time did not reflect the contributions of many staff, including himself, which were part of Forest's matching of funds. In response to a question, Ms. Carolyn Ballard clarified that costs for fuels management primarily involved the creation of fire lines.

ACTION ITEM: SNF to provide summary of matching funds contributed so far.

Mr. Jones-Yellin explained that budgeting challenges included figuring out the right balance of implementation, monitoring, contracts, and staff. He noted that the Forest was expecting an overall cut of 10-15% of its entire budget, not just the DLRP funds. At the same time he noted that Sierra National Forest may be one of the first to begin revising its land management plan. A second challenge includes matching funds for various programs like DLRP and the state's Green Sticker (off-highway vehicle) program. This requires a large amount of money, and can undercut the Forest's ability to complete other deliverables. In turn this means that the Forest gets less money the following year, further shrinking the amount available for budget line items (BLI).

Mr. Craig Thomas asked whether the DLRP money had been cut because of specific targets not being met, and/or the "mill infrastructure offset" component of the original proposal (which argued that money would be saved from keeping the local mill open and not having to haul logs a further distance). Mr. Jones-Yellin replied that this probably was not the case since the reduction in funding significantly outweighed the offset amount in the original proposal, and this also had been allocated during the first year. Mr. Chad Hanson expressed concern that shortfalls would be met by cutting mature trees. Mr. Ramiro Rojas clarified that the Washington Office had reduced Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) funds by 10% across the board for the purpose of overhead and management, which was not something anticipated. Mr. Jones-Yellin noted this was to cover administration costs for each collaborative, and a headquarters decision.

Mr. van Velsor asked where monitoring was in the expenses, including LiDAR, and what amount of funding would be available for this in the future. He noted that other CFLRPs allocated 10-11% of their funding for monitoring, which in the DLRP case would amount to approximately \$124,000 for FY 2010-11. Mr. Jones-Yellin noted that timber crew, silviculturalist, and resource

specialist activities were all considered contributions to monitoring. Mr. van Velsor stressed that he felt implementation and effectiveness monitoring should be differentiated, and that in other CFLRPs the money for implementation monitoring was included in the contract, while a full 11% went to effectiveness. He suggested this would be appropriate for the DLRP, too, and asked for clarification and careful tracking going forward, as well as a better sense of what would be available. Mr. Jones-Yellin noted that in FY 2010 that about 20% was spent on monitoring, and in FY 11 about 20% will again be spent. Mr. Mark Smith further suggested that before any work was done there was also baseline monitoring, which necessarily came before implementation monitoring.

Mr. Thomas suggested that members get more aggressive about asserting projects in Washington, D.C., and Senator Feinstein's office, including educating these people.

Mr. van Velsor noted the need to pull the Dinkey North and South monitoring work into the larger monitoring discussion.

ACTION ITEM: Monitoring Work Group to incorporate Dinkey North and South activities.

Ms. Whelan explained that by October 1 she will have a plan for the Forest's budget for FY 12, including the DLRP. It will then likely take months to work through Congress, like this past year. In response to a question, she also clarified that CLFR funding that is not spent one year rolls over, rather than being lost; it was, however, important to spend matching funds when they are available since they come from the Forest's annual budget, which does not roll over. She also replied that not spending all CFLR funding in one year does not decrease future allocations, as this work is characterized as in progress. In response to a question, Ms. Whelan explained that right now the Forest was planning for a 15% reduction compared with FY 2011.

Mr. Hanson expressed concern that the shortfall could be made up in various ways, including focusing on sawtimber rather than hand thinning, road decommissioning, or prescribed fire, which would not be consistent with the CFLR charge. He felt that many of these treatments were inexpensive, and should be maintained. Mr. Jones-Yellin replied that the Snowy Patterson, Soaproot, and Eastfork projects were poor locations for sawtimber and not chosen for these reasons. Mr. Hanson appreciated the concern and hoped that this would not change in the future. Regarding Eastfork, he expressed serious concern that the Collaborative's early discussions on this project were not reflected in the proposed action -- topics like blackbacked woodpecker habitat, prescribed fire, noxious weed reduction, which the Collaborative had supported.

Mr. Thomas noted that further work was needed to monitor and also quantify the economic value of activities like meadow restoration, in terms of ecological, water quality, water supply, and spiritual benefits. Mr. Patrick Emmert agreed that ecological restoration metrics should be developed and documented in parallel with economic benefits.

Mr. John Mount noted that removing large trees brings in revenue but it was more important to cover ground with a landscape-level approach. Any such activities would also have to be sequenced carefully, like with piling often coming before burning. Mr. Hanson did not agree that mature trees needed to be removed before thinning and prescribed burning.

The group then provided feedback on a graph illustrating contract work. Mr. Smith noted that the graph represents a point in time, and does not show the fuels work. Mr. Hanson suggested that the graph is useful, and it would be helpful to show both what is completed at this point as well as what is projected. Mr. Rojas agreed that this information should be shown side-by-side in future illustrations.

3. Budget Options Discussion

Mr. Jones-Yellin laid out a series of options, including a focus on implementation. The options and subsequent discussions points included:

1. Reduce NEPA-intensive work by focusing on categorical exclusions (CEs), for example, for aquatics, habitat improvement, basic maintenance and modification.
 - a. Mr. Hanson suggested this had merit, so long as it focused on active management rather than saw timber. Mr. Jones-Yellin replied that these distinctions were important, and at the same time he felt site conditions would determine the appropriate means. Mr. Thomas clarified that he did not hear the Forest proposing to increase sawtimber volumes to make up budget shortfalls. Regardless, he felt the more important question was what trees stayed on the land, which would be a place-based conversation.
 - b. Mr. Patrick Emmert and Mr. Rich Bagley also suggested this had merit and should be further considered.
 - c. Ms. Ballard noted that CEs can be time-consuming just like Environmental Assessments because the need for analyzing cumulative effects.
2. Focus on larger projects per the NEPA process.
 - a. Mr. Larry Duysen suggested that doing NEPA for larger areas had merit. Mr. Jones-Yellin asked whether a single Environmental Impact Statement for the entire DLRP was suggested, and Ms. Whelan noted that other CFLRs had tried this. Mr. Hanson expressed concern that this approach could negate opportunities for adaptive management and scaling up.
 - b. Mr. Emmert and Mr. Bagley and Ms. Flick suggested this approach should be further considered. Ms. Ballard suggested this was possible and that a programmatic NEPA would have less detail, but would nonetheless adhere to the Standards and Guidelines at the project level.
 - c. Mr. Rojas suggested that 10,000 acres is about the largest size that can be analyzed without losing important detail. Nonetheless Mr. Rojas suggested that there might be ways to reduce the effort by asking how much burn potential existed as a whole, how much smoke would actually be produced, etc. This would allow for better adjusting the size of subsequent projects working on these issues. Finally, a single

contract could be set to treat and sell small material from restoration in a sufficient volume to make it economically worthwhile.

- d. Mr. Thomas asked whether cost reductions would be achieved this way if later more specific analyses were required. Ms. Whelan noted that other projects like the Kings River Experimental Watershed were viewed as failures or successes depending on who you asked. Nonetheless a larger scale could help streamline staffing and administrative overhead.
3. Focus on cost-effective implementation, for example, prescribed fire, offsetting costs with sawlogs that are a byproduct of restoration
 4. Focus on implementation of projects with existing NEPA documents, and see if these match the Collaborative's desires
 - a. Ms. Flick requested a list of these projects so the Collaborative could have a more informed discussion of this option.
 - b. **ACTION ITEM:** SNF to provide a list of projects with existing NEPA documents.
 5. Reduce facilitation support
 - a. Mr. Duysen, Mr. Rojas, and Mr. Hanson suggested this support should be maintained. Ms. Flick agreed this support was needed until the group had greater internal capacity.
 6. Emphasize different activities, for example, focus more on landscape-level analyses and activities like grazing allotments, road maintenance.
 - a. Mr. Thomas suggested that this approach would not address the key issues that need attention -- vegetation thinning, fisher conservation, and so forth. Mr. Jones-Yellin suggested that this would continue, except at a larger scale.
 - b. Mr. Thomas added that another approach would be to turn an analysis on its head; in the case of prescribed fire, for example, rather than plan areas where fire can go, identify the areas where it cannot go and then plan everything else as a whole. Mr. Hanson supported the idea of identifying locations, mapping, estimating emissions, and estimating acreage for prescribed fire that could be done without pretreatment.
 - c. Mr. van Velsor echoed that strategic planning and an overview of all potential projects should be completed, and then perhaps a more general assessment of conditions and threats could be completed, along the lines of the CBI index for fisher habitat.

Ms. Whelan added that another option was to streamline existing work to increase economies, for example, identify all the NEPAs that will be conducted during the year, so that financing, administration, and staffing can be better planned.

Mr. Smith suggested that enough data was never available and that in many cases Forest Service staff overanalyze issues and write too much. The NEPA process could be more cost-effective if analyses were streamlined.

Mr. Mount suggested that some aspect of each approach was probably needed.

4. Ladder Fuels Joint Fact-Finding Update

The facilitator explained that the group had not yet reached consensus and would meet again in late August. Mr. Rojas explained that he had chosen to narrow the analysis to the treatment of ladder fuels in fisher den buffers as this is what would be needed for the Soaproot Project.

Mr. Hanson noted that he and Ms. Britting had not anticipated that the modeling would be limited in this way. The two topics – ladder fuels in general and ladder fuels in fisher den buffers – were different, and in the latter context he would want a more conservative approach because the sensitivity of the habitat. Further discussion was needed on this, as well as results that showed different fire intensities having similar effects.

Mr. Thomas affirmed he had had a similar understanding of the intent of the work as Mr. Hanson and Ms. Britting. He noted that addressing fisher den buffer treatments would involve other issues like predation and cover. Regardless, he did not want to set a diameter limit for ladder fuels, as he felt that the diameter is determined by field conditions and physics. He felt it would be wise to invest more in training people to mark trees and habitat better.

Mr. Bagley confirmed that the focus had shifted. He also agreed that diameter was less useful than field conditions, and that training for marking should be emphasized.

Mr. Hanson noted concern about the probability that an area could be burned repeatedly with prescribed burns, and that this should be factored into recommendations.

In response to a question, Ms. Ballard replied that training crews is hard because they change over time, as well as the standards they are aiming for (structures, habitat, features). Mr. Thomas noted that the mark in Fishcamp was done very well. Mr. Smith noted that SNF crews have had lots of training, and it takes sophisticated professionals and an executive commitment to accomplish this. Mr. Rojas noted that confidence was increasing with time.

Mr. Jones-Yellin noted that ID Teams had worked on scoping and developing a range of alternatives for the Soaproot project. He had understood from the facilitator that the Work Group was comfortable in further exploring a 20" clumpy prescription, but later found out from stakeholders that this was not the case. He reiterated that he was hoping for a clear recommendation from the Work Group that could be used for the preferred alternative. He further noted that additional alternatives had been added to incorporate requests from other members like Mr. Emmert and Mr. Hanson.

In response to a question, Ms. Ballard clarified that nothing required the Forest to use its proposed action as the preferred alternative, and Mr. Jones-Yellin reiterated that the Work Group's recommendation would become the preferred alternative.

Mr. Hanson noted that he believed the Forest was operating in good faith. He also clarified that he would not support a 20" clumpy prescription in fisher den buffers.

Mr. Thomas emphasized the importance of adhering to the Collaborative's charter and joint fact-finding process, before characterizing anything as a decision. This included writing up options.

Mr. Jones-Yellin noted the complexity of the ladder fuel issues, and reiterated his hope that alternatives could still be informed and developed based on this work.

5. Informational Updates: Monitoring, Soaproot, Eastfork, and Snowy Patterson

Mr. van Velsor noted that the monitoring matrix was being further developed, particularly questions, indicators, and outcomes. The group was planning to meet again in August. There were additional questions that would have to be developed and added around existing information and activities, per discussion earlier in the day (including Dinkey North and South). The activities would have to be prioritized, and serious attention paid to staffing as well. Mr. van Velsor also noted that a National Indicators subcommittee had met and was provided comments to the Forest Service, and would be holding a webinar on August 17 for anyone interested.

Mr. Jones-Yellin shared that the comment period for Soaproot had recently ended and the ID Team was drafting alternatives, as noted earlier. For Eastfork the ID Team would meet the week of August 8 to review comments which ended on August 1, and draft alternatives for this project as well. Snowy Patterson was mostly contracted, and the Environmental Assessment would be reviewed internally on September 12-23, and then out for public review on September 30.

Mr. Hanson expressed concern that oftentimes the proposed action becomes the preferred alternative without carefully considering other alternatives. He asked whether the comments received on Eastfork would be reflected in the analysis. Mr. Jones-Yellin noted that the comments would be highlighted and incorporated in the list of proposed actions, for example, suggestions about high intensity fire and the creation of blackbacked woodpecker habitat. He also commented that the preferred action would be the only developed by the Collaborative. It would be okay if the preferred alternative differed from the proposed action, and it was not assumed by the Forest that the proposed action would be ultimately chosen. The next technical meeting was in late August, and its recommendations would be brought back to the full Collaborative on September 15 for discussion and hopefully for adoption.

Mr. van Velsor noted that The Nature Conservancy was suggesting that each CFLR develop a fact sheet for promotional purposes. After discussion Ms. Flick agreed to develop a first draft of this material. Mr. Jones-Yellin noted that developing such materials would help later in the year when the DLRP turned in its annual report. Ms. Whelan noted that SNF had the flexibility to request a specific amount of funding, starting from the original Dinkey Proposal, and this material could be helpful here as well. Mr. Thomas recommended that members who were interested should discuss a trip to Washington, D.C., to highlight the Collaborative's accomplishments.

ACTION ITEM: Ms. Flick to develop a first draft DLRP fact sheet.

6. Questions for Mr. Dan Jiron, Deputy Regional Forester

Mr. Jones-Yellin confirmed that Mr. Dan Jiron, Deputy Regional Forester for Region 5, planned to attend the Collaborative's September 15 meeting. The group developed the following questions to share with Mr. Jiron in advance of his meeting to help him prepare responses.

1. In what ways will the regional office support systematic fisher conservation in the southern Sierra, specifically with regard to the coordination and integration of similar activities? This includes things like activities happening adjacent to fisher areas; predation dynamics and vegetation cover; ladder fuel treatments in fisher buffers; testing conservation ideas through adaptive management; and regular synthesis of new information and analyses of continuing information gaps.
2. How will small woody biomass be removed and moved effectively? This is a regional question that cannot be answered at the level of a single forest.
3. What were the specific reasons why the Dinkey CFLRP's funding was significantly reduced? Is it anticipated that full funding will be allocated next year, or is this proportion the new norm? Who makes the decisions about the CFLR budgets in Washington, and what are the criteria and considerations they use?

Members were invited to submit additional questions after the meeting. Mr. Thomas subsequently suggested the following paraphrased question: What is the region's vision of prescribed fire, and how can this be scaled up to overcome institutional hurdles? (e.g., air permits, fire crews, leadership support).

7. Attendees

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Elaine Alaniz, USFS | 7. Dorian Fougères, | 11. Ramiro Rojas, USFS |
| 2. Rich Bagley | facilitator | 12. Mark Smith |
| 3. Carolyn Ballard, USFS | 8. Chad Hanson | 13. Craig Thomas |
| 4. Larry Duysen | 9. Mosé Jones-Yellin, | 14. Craig Thompson, USFS |
| 5. Patrick Emmert | USFS | 15. Stan Van Velsor |
| 6. Pamela Flick | 10. John Mount | 16. Cindy Whelan, USFS |